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TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD
Working Party on the Medium-term Plan
and the Programme Budget
Twenty-ninth session
Geneva, 16-17 January and
14-16 April 1997
Agenda item 3

CHAIRMAN'S SUMMARY

1. At the first part of its twenty-ninth session, the Working Party discussed the proposed revisions to the programme of work for the biennium 1996-1997 and the UNCTAD section of the proposed United Nations programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999.

Proposed revisions to the programme of work for the biennium 1996-1997

2. The purpose of the Working Party's discussion, which was based on an informal draft presented by the UNCTAD secretariat, was to endorse the proposed revisions in order to provide a basis for the secretariat's work in 1997 and for the evaluation of UNCTAD's performance at the end of the biennium.

3. Members of the Working Party noted that, at the Working Party's previous session, they had been requested to provide the secretariat with written comments on the proposed revisions and expressed their disappointment that a number of their comments had not been taken into account. The UNCTAD secretariat explained that its task had been to include changes that reflected a consensus among the members of the Working Party. Accordingly, the suggestions that had not been included were those that, in the view of the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, did not command consensus.

4. At the close of its discussions, the Working Party, notwithstanding member States' concerns on individual items, adopted a decision endorsing the proposed revisions, as amended.

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UNCTAD section of the proposed United Nations programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999

5. The Working Party's discussions in this connection took place within the context of paragraph 107(a) of the "Partnership for growth and development" in which the Secretary-General of UNCTAD was invited to consult with the Working Party during the preparation of the work programme and budget from the earliest possible stage. The purpose of its discussions, which were based on an informal draft presented by the UNCTAD secretariat, was to provide the Secretary-General of UNCTAD with comments and advice prior to the submission of the draft to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for incorporation into the proposed programme budget as a whole.

6. The members of the Working Party made a number of general and specific comments and suggestions on the draft. Among other things, they referred to the need to ensure maximum consistency between the presentation and wording of the different sections of the draft, particularly in respect of expert meetings and meeting units, as well as to ensure adequate reference in each subprogramme to the subprogramme's contribution to UNCTAD's work on least developed countries. A request was also made for greater clarity regarding the mandate and funding of specific items of the work programme and the nature of UNCTAD's contribution to those projects undertaken in conjunction with other agencies or institutions.

7. The UNCTAD secretariat assured the members of the Working Party that all their comments and suggestions would be fully considered and would be reflected in the draft to the maximum extent possible when the draft was finalized by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD. The Working Party would conduct its formal consideration of the UNCTAD section of the proposed programme budget, as approved by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, at the second part of its twenty-ninth session. The secretariat also agreed to provide, in the near future, additional resource-use information on the members of the secretariat and their responsibility and on the individual activities of each division.

8. The Working Party made several comments with regard to the issue of UNCTAD publications, and a number of broad issues were raised by several countries. On publications, one view was that comments on specific publications in the work programme for 1998-1999 could best be made at the second part of its session when the results of UNCTAD's review of its publications policy would be known. Another view was that specific publications should not be discussed in the Working Party; they should be taken up by the competent body. A proposal was made to the effect that the secretariat should conduct a survey of member States to determine their views on UNCTAD publications.

9. The members of the Working Party requested the Secretary-General of UNCTAD to ensure that the amendments set out in the annex to this summary be incorporated into the revised draft of the proposed programme narrative.

Annex

1. *Add the following to the chapeau of each of Subprogrammes 9.1 to 9.4:*

UNCTAD IX decided that LDCs will constitute a cross-cutting issue in work of UNCTAD. In accordance with this decision, each activity under this Subprogramme will give priority consideration to LDC issues, and the Sub-programme as a whole will provide the required sectoral inputs within its scope to the activities under Sub-programme 9.5.

2. *Add the following to the chapeau of Subprogramme 9.5:*

It is noted that the Division for the Least Developed, Landlocked and Island Developing Countries has been discontinued as part of the reorganization of the UNCTAD Secretariat. The implementation of the Sub-programme will be coordinated by the Office of the Special Coordinator for Least Developed, Landlocked and Island Developing Countries. In accordance with the outcome of UNCTAD IX, LDCs will constitute a cross-cutting issue in UNCTAD's work and the sectoral issues will be dealt with by the Divisions of UNCTAD within their respective mandates.